

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

My name is Bill Harris. I represent House District 30. My District extends from the Main Street of Lewistown, east to Circle, MT. Today I am presenting to you, HB 412.

HB 412 addresses standing in court. It requires standing for a non-profit organization seeking an injunction or a restraining order against an industrial operation with the intention to obstruct in their permitting process and other endeavors. This is a common practice for foreign and domestic competitors who have an interest in obstructing the expansion of industrial growth in Montana. They help fund organizations willing to use court action to stop or delay competitive companies working within the scope of Montana Law. The ambiguities in our own Constitution tie the hands of our agencies and give the parties seeking the injunction or a restraining order the advantage by tying up procedural actions of industrial companies in court, causing very expensive delays or even obstructing them from moving forward due to arbitration.

One example might be, organizations with foreign oil interests might fund an environmental non-profit, "looking for a cause". This group then files an injunction or restraining order against a company attempting to do business in Montana. The result is the foreign company gains a large advantage in doing business, while the targeted company is obstructed or shut down completely. The environmental or other non-profit organization usually gains a large donation or even a court ordered reward.

Who is the loser? Montana and the taxpayers of Montana. All of us lose because our communities are deprived of good jobs and the revenue sources that Montana needs.

These funding groups are not always foreign. Some political organizations use this means to further their agenda. A very good example might be, the many organizations funded by George Soros.

This bill is an attempt to expose this unethical practice. Montana is being duped by foreign and domestic interests. Their agenda is not our agenda. This practice may look like smart business to them but it is disastrous to Montana and our economy.

Let's expose and kill this underhanded attack on our economy and future prosperity. This bill isn't going to stop all unethical practices, but it will go a long way in exposing them and demanding transparency of undisclosed participants.